As our housing crisis continues and we see numbers increase of individuals experiencing homelessness, it is as important as ever to have a streamlined and coordinated effort to address the issues.

I moved to Bend August of 2011 as a Notre Dame AmeriCorps volunteer. I was only supposed to be in Bend for 11 months, but 8 years later I am still here. After my 11 months of service, I spent several months living in my car trying to find housing.

I have had the opportunity to work with several organizations in Central Oregon and have seen the community change vastly over the past 8 years. I love all that Central Oregon has to offer, from glacial lakes and rivers to craft beer and community support and collaboration.

There is always room for growth and there are definitely aspects that I would change about Central Oregon, but for the most part I am happy to be in a progressive and liberal state where I have created a home and started a family. My family and I enjoy white water rafting, skiing and camping. If it is an activity outside, we typically are enjoying it.

"Our community needs more affordable housing."

WHAT IS THE HOMELESS LEADERSHIP COALITION, & WHAT DOES BEING "CO-CHAIR" MEAN?

The HLC is Central Oregon’s Continuum of Care providing education, advocacy and prioritization of services to those experiencing homelessness across the tri-county region, including the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

As co-chair, my role is to ensure the HLC is meeting its standards and that funding requirements are met. I also believe it is my role to provide education and raise awareness of the issues our community faces regarding housing insecurity to advocate for those experiencing homelessness and bring more services and funding to our community.

ARE YOU WORKING ON ANY SPECIAL PROJECTS?

One of the projects I am most passionate about at the time, is establishing a warming shelter in Bend and ensuring that all warming shelters across the region have the ability to run smoothly this winter season.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES OF SERVING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CENTRAL OREGON?

Bend, and Central Oregon for the most part, is a resort town- whether we like to admit it or not. There are several biases and stereotypes abundant throughout the community and it is hard as a service provider to educate and change those views. There is a lack of resources dedicated to individuals experiencing homelessness. Of course housing is the main issue, and our community needs more affordable housing- and we need to define what ‘affordable’ is.

WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED TO CONTINUE DOING THIS WORK?

The people. I strongly believe and am empowered by the resiliency of those I serve every day. Each person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect despite what their current housing situation is and my goal each day is to make a connection with someone and assist in whatever way I can.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN SOLVING HOMELESSNESS?

Volunteering at a shelter or meal site is always a good starting point. It provides someone with an opportunity to have their own experience and meet individuals that are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity first hand. Of course coming to an HLC monthly meeting to network and hear of opportunities in the community is a great start, or even connecting with one of the HLC committees.

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.” -Edward Everett Hale